



Hazardous Materials Program

Emergency Management Division
Washington Military Department

Background

On December 4, 1984, a cloud of poisonous gas leaked from a Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal, India, killing more than 2500 people and injuring tens of thousands. On October 17, 1986, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) was signed into law to prevent a similar catastrophic event from occurring in the U.S. One part of the SARA provisions is Title III: "The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of 1986". Title III establishes requirements for federal, state and local governments, and industry regarding emergency response planning and community right-to-know on hazardous chemicals.

This Act requires state and local governments and industries to take action to inform citizens about chemical hazards in their communities and to develop emergency plans. The law provides stiff penalties for non compliance and allows citizens to file enforcement lawsuits against companies and government agencies.

Purpose

The Hazardous Materials Program covers several areas. First, it provides oversight and funding to ensure that state, tribal and local governments and industries have comprehensive emergency plans to protect the public from chemical and or other hazardous material accidents. Second, it ensures that emergency responders have the proper training and skills needed to handle potential incidents involving the release of hazardous materials. Third, it is responsive to local planning, response, and mitigation needs through grant programs, professional training, plan review, and technical assistance. Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following duties:

- Support the efforts of the State Emergency Response Commission.(SERC)
- Support the efforts of Tribal Emergency Response Commissions (TERC)
- Assist with local planning, response and mitigation needs through efficient management of Federal and State grant programs.

Goals

The goals of the Washington State Hazardous Materials Program are to:

- Help each local emergency planning committee (LEPC) and Tribal Emergency Response Commission (TERC) to complete a hazardous materials emergency response plan
- Plan for chemical emergencies
- Ensure local jurisdictions are aware of available hazardous materials grants and given the opportunity to apply for these grants on a competitive basis.
- Work with local jurisdictions to ensure effectively use of grants.
- Continue to be responsive to local planning, response, and mitigation needs through grant programs, professional training, plan review and technical assistance.
- Expand planning and mutual aid agreements between the regional hazardous materials response teams and local emergency management offices.

Contact

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